

**United States Environmental Protection Agency
Criminal Investigation Division
Investigative Activity Report**

Case Number:

1000-M764

Case Title:

Cooke Aquaculture Fish Farm Release

Subject of Report:

2017-08-29 Phone Interview of Kessina Lee, Washington State Department of Ecology

Reporting Office:

Seattle, WA, Area Office

Activity Date:

August 29, 2017

Reporting Official and Date:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

31-AUG-2017, Signed by: [REDACTED]

Approving Official and Date:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
05-SEP-2017, Approved by: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SYNOPSIS

On August 29, 2017, SA [REDACTED] interviewed Kessina Lee, an Aquaculture Specialist with the Washington State Department of Ecology, regarding the Atlantic Salmon release near Cypress Island, Washington on August 19, 2017.

DETAILS

On August 29, 2017, I interviewed Kessina Lee, an Aquaculture Specialist with the Washington State Department of Ecology, regarding the Atlantic Salmon release near Cypress Island, Washington on August 19, 2017. After being notified of the identity of the interviewing agent and the nature of the interview, Lee, in substance, provided the following information:

The Atlantic Salmon release occurred on August 19, 2017, and the Washington State Department of Ecology (WA DOE) was notified, as required within in 24 hours, on August 20, 2017. There are three aquaculture pens operated by Cooke Aquaculture Pacific (CAP) near Cypress Island, Washington. The #2 pen was severely damaged during operations and released what is now estimated to be approximately 185,000 Atlantic Salmon into Puget Sound.

CAP's aquaculture pens #1 and #2 have a history of violations with the WA DOE for the amount of sediment building underneath the pens. She knows in approximately 2011, the #2 pen was moved approximately 200 feet west of its previous location for the purposes of better flushing of the pen. WA DOE is concerned with the total organic buildup on the ocean floor underneath the pens.

In February of 2017, CAP submitted a Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA) for the removal of the #2 pen and complete replacement of the floating structure. Inside of the permit application, CAP also requested that the #2 pen be turned 90 degrees to resist the tide changes better. This application for work would be completed while the company has taken the cohort of Atlantic Salmon from the pens and is in the harvest period known as "fallowing." This is the time in which the Atlantic Salmon are removed from the pens and this allows the sediment under the pens to partially recover and assist the other aquatic animals to replenish. In this case, CAP is taking the Atlantic Salmon from all three pens at the same time. This period lasts between 2-6 months. The nets of the pens are also pulled from the water for cleaning and repairs or replacement.

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On August 23, 2017, she, Mike Lynch and several members of WA DOE visited the collapsed pen near Cypress Island where they met with CAP Environmental Permit Coordinator Kevin Bright and CAP General Manager Innes Weir. While there the WA DOE employees took photographs, notes and completed a general documentation of the situation.

WA DOE is not aware of any unusually high tides on August 19, 2017, and she dismisses the idea that the solar eclipse effected the tides that early. She knows that there have been higher and stronger tides this year than the tides on the 19th of August 2017. Pens #1 and #3 are currently functional and structurally sound because in her opinion these two pens do not take the same tidal stresses that pen #2 does.

WA DOE has setup an operational command post to coordinate the recovery of as many of the Atlantic Salmon as possible. The Lummi Tribe has collected approximately 20,000 Atlantic Salmon and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife has allowed unlimited catching of the Atlantic Salmon by local fishermen. Mike Lynch of WA DOE oversees the command post currently.

WA DOE has requested documents from CAP, but has given them a return date for the documents in early October to let the aquaculture pen situation return to normal. The company has announced that they have recovered approximately 120,000 Atlantic Salmon from the remains of the #2 pen structure.

In July of 2017, pen #2 had a mooring issue as it broke loose from one of its mooring cables. Pen #2 had to be retrieved with the assistance of a tugboat and some repairs were conducted to re-establish pen #2 in its proper position. No Atlantic Salmon were released during this issue. In speaking with Weir about this incident, Weir described the repairs as something to the effect of "lots of welding and cross-bracing."

Agents Note* on that same date, Lee sent me an email containing CAP's Joint Aquatic Resource Permit Application (JARPA).

ATTACHMENT

Cooke JARPA Site drawings.pdf

Cooke JARPA Feb2_2017_Site 2_ pen replacement project .pdf